

February 21, 1970

Mrs. Judy Whitson Bonner
McClain, Fletcher and Bonner,
Public Relations
Dallas, Texas

Dear Mrs. Bonner,

The kindness of a friend who sent it to me and your great fun thing called "Investigation of a Homicide", have made my day! In so many ways! The mere glance I've had guarantees me this. I look forward so much to reading it with care, savoring each of the noble, glorious words one by one. And now, at long last, with so many others, I will finally have "inside information that was denied even to the Warren Commission".

I mean, what a police force you do have in Dallas. They do such wonderful things, not the least of which is denying the real poop to the official investigation of a President's murder. Please do not misunderstand me - I find nothing inconsistent in this.

Right off, as you can see from this quotation, I devoured every word on the jacket. And from this I know you are not just an ordinary, run-of-the-mill writer/publicist. You reach right into people's minds, like knowing all along that Oswald was going to flee Dallas, no doubt the reason he left almost all his money home. You weren't fooled a bit, I can see, by his going into a movie instead of a plane, train, bus or car, 'cause you knew he had invented this new way of fleeing-leaving your money behind and beginning in a cul de sac.

Of course, I did not miss the promise of - for the very first time - the complete transcript (your words) of the police broadcasts. After all, we do have three conflicting and contradictory official versions, aside from those buried in assorted files. Is it not time for the complete thing, the whole bit? Then I noticed a touch of your brilliance, a tiny little limitation, to "November 22, 1963". All the time I had thought the "Investigation of a homicide" continued, at least through the murder of the accused, the newest technique in investigations of homicides, murder of the accused (so much cleaner than messy trials with nasty lawyers asking pushy questions, isn't it?). Naturally, I just couldn't wait for this, so I opened to these "complete transcripts", if only for the day, and ho! sheer joy, my life and concepts start anew as I really begin to learn the true meaning of words. "Complete", for even a 24-hour day alone, means from 12:17 p.m. (p. 307) until 1:56 p.m. (p. 342), or until 12:54 p.m. (p. 364). This is the real, modern way to "solve" crimes, "investigate" murders - contract three into one and 24 hours down to about 1 1/2. If I could have brought such vision and imagination to my own work, how many long months I could have saved, how many fewer words I could have used. But I do not want to leave this without proper due to your untainted, unquestionable source, the derring-do Dallas police, who provided two of the three officially-published "complete" transcripts, each of which isn't. No doubt they treat you better than the official, national investigation (you are prettier!).

Thus fortified in spirit and enriched in mind, I went back to the beginning. First thing is "Where others have erred". I know you really meant, "Where others have erred". You, naturally, will not. How could you (I mean, after all, Dinkley Creek, pine scents and all of that)? Right away, I see you have found - or say you have found, what neither the FBI, your Dallas Police Chief, the Secret Service, or even the Warren Commission, ever did. "It is an "error" when Mark Lane (not one of my close friends) "says nobody saw Oswald leave School Book Depository (sic) after shots were fired". The "fact" is the "official (is there another kind?) witness affidavit, page 264". So, somebody did see and identify Oswald leaving that building. So nervous in anticipation, I fumbled as I turned the pages, to the new kind of "official affidavits", those neither signed nor notarized. Ah, dear girl, you have it all! Away with the outdated concepts of the backward past, the inhibiting demands of law, outmoded concepts of evidence and proof! (Right on, did I hear?) Of course, my soaring hopes dipped a bit when I saw your proof of Lane's "error" is the very same James Worrell, Jr. (I hear he is no longer with us?) your unfailing, unquestionable Dallas police called one awful liar. So I tell myself, "Well, this Judy Bonner has the whole ball of wax, so maybe she has a different Worrell affidavit than the one the government published". So, I read it. And I find no mention of Oswald in it. Nor any meaningful description of the man said (time, naturally, not given) to have run right smack dab into all those fine Dallas police right at that very corner. Or is it that they paid no attention to a running man in that moment of great crisis?

Well, ma'am, I must confess that by the time I got to your enumeration of what you call my error, after this, I had only faith in you to go on. Need I tell you that I was immediately pleased to note that, with perhaps a million published words, the great, the omniscient, the all-knowing Judy Bonner, this sui generis gift to understanding, writing and crime-solving, could find but two teeny-weensy "errors" I had made? (I could have shown you more, but they'd note have been these.)

"In Whitewash, author Harold Weisberg says Oswald didn't know route of President's motorcade". For this redefined thing you call "Fact", "see affidavit, page 286" (isn't this one, too, an "official" one?).

Well, Mrs. Perry Mason, you sure stop me here. All the time I thought that what I had really said is that before going to work that morning, Oswald, from the official evidence, not only didn't know the route of the motorcade, but, from what had been published, if he was aware of it, couldn't have, because on this crucial point two contradictory versions had been printed. If it is not assuming too much to assume you have the book you say you quote, please look at it, especially page 14, and the map from that morning's paper, on page 23.

So, here we are on your page 286, and here we have another of these new-style "affidavits", neither signed nor certified, by James Jarman. And in it it says that he told Oswald after they got to work that morning that he guessed the motorcade would go past their building. This leaves me wondering, for not only is your language not at all mine, as you represent it, but more, if you will be kind enough to look at that same page 14 in my book, you'll find that the very first thing on it is, guess what? Direct quotation of the very same James Jarman! Complete with citation of source, his testimony, 3H201. We both know your are a sweet spirit, that you did none of this great labor with any thought of gain, only from unequalled selflessness. So, would you please write me a letter explaining all of this to me, especially the part where it is an "error" for me to quote Jarman and not an error for you to do it?

My only other error, according to you, comes out this way: "Weisberg also claims attempt to move Oswald from city to county jail was unnecessary". What you so neatly describe as "FACT" is cited to pages 174 and 175.

Let me begin with a confession. If I were writing this same material today, armed with what I have learned in the past five years or so, I'd have had some questions about the legality of not conveying Oswald to the sheriff as soon as he was arraigned, for I've been given to understand this rather long delay, the delay that made the murder possible, may have been a denial of his rights (you have them in Texas, too, you know). The part to which you apparently refer begins on my page 89 and continues for a while. I go into it rather thoroughly, and you will find the most direct quotation of your own Dallas officials, at some length. May I add I've heard no complaints, especially from Sheriff Decker, of whom I say but the kindest things, or from former Chief Curry, with whom I had a very gratifying personal interview in November 1968?

For a while you had me feeling I am other than the wise father, for from your words I do not, really, recognize my writing. I did say a number of things that, to less arcane minds, are not adequately represented in your Texas shorthand. For example, that "the county sheriff ordinarily takes custody of the prisoners and assumes responsibility for his safekeeping" when "a person is charged with a felony" (pp.88-89); that "at no point does the ~~Waxman~~ Report in any way indicate a legal necessity for such a transfer" (p.90); that "why the transfer was attempted" is "neither asked nor answered" in the Report. And so many other things neither in the cited part of your book nor your complaint about my "error".

If you feel I could have quoted a better source, or that the source I did quote is somehow in error, please so inform me. Now let me cite my exact words on the very complaint of error you make against me - and please be kind enough to note that these are quoted words, not "Weisberg also claims" - from the middle of page 90:

"Decker told FBI Agent Bookhout on November 28 that 'to his knowledge there is no State law governing transfers of prisoners from the Dallas City Jail to the Dallas County Jail' (19H453)."

Perhaps their uniqueness blinds me to your words, but I find nothing relevant to this on your page 174. (Unless one considers what you do not, that the visit of the ACLU delegation at the same period you discuss but of which you make no mention, perhaps because at that very same time and so very publicly - on nationwide TV, ^{on 11/26/68} ~~and~~ was begging for this same ACLU to help him, is somehow relevant to the preservation of his rights and life, so much involved in this transfer attempt.) You do at one point come close to what a liberal mind can interpret as necessity on page 175. And, with this limited familiarity with your work, I would not think "error" is adequate description of the fact that some kind of general discussion continues for the next two, uncited pages. You say, "Normally a prisoner becomes the property (sic) of the county as soon as he has been charged and arraigned (my emphasis), and transfer from city jail is handled by Sheriff Bill Decker..." No more about the alleged legal need. And this one thing is what? What I also said. So again, I wonder how the same thing is wrong when I say it and right when you do.

Dear soaring spirit of Texas truth, upholder of the sacred obligations of the writer (if not the publicist) in a society such as ours, I fear your heady words will be too much for me unless I take them in small doses, which I shall. As I do I will annotate your dedication to that great tradition, going back to Zenger and Paine. Should you want to hear more from me when I have been able to complete and survive this, please tell me.

There was once a time, before that awful "Warren Court", when such writing might have been considered libel. With the prevailing permissiveness, as I believe one of the more modest beliefs of your area is described, there is the new question of "malice". You may want to take this up with your publisher and his distributor. I shall send both copies of this letter.

However, until then, the tradition of writers from which I think I stem would seem to call for some immediate rectification. I look forward to copies of those communications in which you attempt to accomplish this, to the degree it may still be done.

Yours for bigger - and better- "Investigations of a Homicide".

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg